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The Arms of Benedict XV

By
Pierre de Chaignon La Rose



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An Introduction to the Study of
PAPAL ARMORIALS

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THE ARMS OF BENEDICT XV.

An Introduction to the Study of Papal Armorial.

I.

THE arms of His Holiness Pope Benedict XV may be "blazoned" (i. e. described in the technical language of heraldry) as follows: Party per fess, two coats: A, Or, a demi-eagle displayed issuant sable, langued gules; B, Party per bend azure and or, a church, the tower at sinister, argent, essorée gules, the tower-cross of the second. This is to say, in colloquial terms, that the shield is divided horizontally into two equal compartments, each containing an independent heraldic composition. The top compartment shows on a gold "field" or background the upper half of a black eagle with red tongue, his wings outspread ("issant" meaning that the body springs from the partition line). This composition is, as will be explained later, a modified version of the old arms of the Holy Roman Empire. In the bottom compartment the field is divided diagonally into two theoretically equal parts, the upper triangle being of blue, the lower of gold; on this compound background is shown a red-roofed, silver church, the tower, topped with a gold cross, rising at "sinister", the left from the point of view of the *bearer* of the shield. This second composition is the heraldic cognizance peculiar to the della Chiesa family, the design in the upper compartment being common to many Italian houses—for reasons to be shown.

Thanks to the personal kindness of the Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Boston, who procured for me from Rome colored prints of His Holiness's arms both as Archbishop and as Pope, I have been able to study these arms from what may be

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regarded an official version, as the print of the papal "achievement" is the embossed heading of the Pontiff's personal writ-



ing-paper. The arms, although on a very small scale, are gilded and colored apparently with meticulous care, and the "charges" and "tinctures" are exactly those named in the

above blazon. Artificers may well note a few minor details: the beak of the eagle is black like the rest of his body, but the tongue, tiny as it is in the pontifical print, is carefully indicated as red, just as the minute cross on the church-tower is shown of gold; and although silver leaf is used elsewhere on the achievement, *both* keys are gilded. A question which may puzzle craftsmen when rendering these arms on a large scale, is what color may be given to the spaces of the window and door openings of the church. On the print described these small apertures are brushed in with an indeterminate, neutral grey, which may be regarded as a lower tone, in shadow, of the argent of the church itself. There is, generally, no heraldic necessity for these apertures, in castles, towers, etc., to be of a different tincture from that of the main fabric. However, when the roof is blazoned of a different tincture, the openings often follow suit. So in this case, on a large drawing, to show these openings in color instead of metal, would not be a serious violation of heraldic propriety.

The heraldry itself is extremely interesting, and, like all good heraldry, it is also extremely simple. Undoubtedly many sentimental effusions will be written about it by the school of amateurs who have never got beyond what Planché calls the "astrology of heraldry", and many complications will be read into it, complications which exist chiefly in the mind of the beholder. But it is strikingly possible, by analyzing this shield and comparing it with analogous arms of other sovereign pontiffs, to show from it the essentially practical nature of heraldry, its simple reasonableness, before the sciolistic vaporings of the sixteenth and seventeenth century heraldic "astrologers" befogged the subject with a vast cloud of inanity. And fortunately these arms are so clear that, even in the absence of any purely genealogical data, one can analyze them, heraldically, through their own internal evidence.

In Figure A I have drawn what, from this internal evidence, a herald would assume to have been the original arms of the family: simply a church, a *chiesa*, on a somewhat peculiarly parti-colored field—allusive, or "canting" arms, *armes parlantes* as the heralds say, where the composition expresses or alludes to the name of the bearer. That the original func-

tion of a coat-of-arms was mere identification is now, unhappily, too often ignored. The late J. R. Planché, Somerset Herald, in his invaluable little book, *The Pursuivant of Arms*, 1851, writes: "It is scarcely possible to find an ancient coat that was not originally canting or allusive (that is to say, alluding to the name, estate, or profession of the bearer), excepting, of course, those displaying simply the honorable ordinaries, which, as I have already stated, took their rise from the ornamental strengthenings of the shield, and even these were occasionally so." And Father Marc Gilbert de Varennes in *Le Roy d'Armes*, 1540 (I use Planché's translation)



FIG. A

observes: "Our ancestors, less curious and more simple than we are at present, usually took care in the composition of their arms that there should be a correspondence between their name and the figures with which they emblazoned their shields: which they did namely to this end, that all sorts of persons, intelligent or ignorant, citizens or countrymen, should recognize easily and without further inquiry, to whom the lands or the houses belonged wherever they found them as soon as they had cast their eyes upon the escutcheon." In an age when heraldry served a very practical purpose, the endless romantic and symbolical complications of the later school of heraldic sciolists would have seemed nearly as grotesque as they do to modern scholarship. It is too often forgotten that the simple canon of medieval heraldic usage, evolved from a practical military necessity, was well-nigh completed nearly three hundred years before the first heraldic romanticist was able to burst into print.

Let us consider a few clearly allusive papal coats. The very first that may be regarded as approximately free from the

suspicion of being either apocryphal or "retroactive" is that of Lucius II, 1144-45. His shield has on it simply a ramping bear. Now, first, for a little "astrology" on the subject, which even some modern minds seem always to crave when anything so recondite (!) as heraldry is involved. We will begin at random with Guillim: ¹ "It is written of the She-bear that she bringeth forth her young Ones imperfect and deformed like a lump of raw Flesh and licks it till it comes to Shape and Perfection. The She-bear is most cruelly intraged against any that shall hurt her Young, or despoil her of them: As the Scripture saith, in setting forth the fierce Anger of the Lord, *that he will meet his Adversaries as a Bear robbed of her Whelps,*" etc. See how satisfactory it would be to a certain type of mind to use this as the basis for a serious explanation of the real, heraldic, significance of Lucius II's coat. One more "astrological" quotation, from Sylvanus Morgan,² will give details less accidentally germane (note especially the logic of the passage): "Next to the Lyon is the *Ursa minor*, having the preheminance, because it is nearest of all the rest to the North Pole; it is called *Helice minor*, by reason of its small Revolution; or rather of *Elice*, a town in *Arcadia* wherein *Calysto* the Great Bear and Mother of the Less was bred. It is called *Cynosura*, because this Constellation, though it carry the name of a Bear, it hath the tail of a Dog; and therefore [sic] Lyons or Bears, being in Arms, and yet not of their own native color are esteemed Honourable, because the inward qualities of the mind, are denoted by the outward tincture; and an Ass cannot be a Lyon, though it hides its ears with the Lyon's skin."—But we are now pretty far away from Lucius II's bear, whose presence on that Pontiff's shield can be quite reasonably explained to all but heraldico-astrological votaries by the fact that the Pontiff's family name, long before he became Pope, was "Hunt", in Italian *Caccia* (*Caccia-Memini*), that Lucania and Umbria at that period were still infested with bears, and that the bear-hunt, *caccia d'orso*, was a welcome pastime even among the Roman nobles.

We may now proceed perhaps more freely with some of the more obviously allusive charges on the arms of subsequent

¹ *A Display of Heraldrie*, 1611. Ed. 1724, p. 190.

² *The Sphere of Gentry*, 1661, p. 90.

Pontiffs. The next to be noted is the sieve, *crivello*, of Urban III, 1185, of the Crivelli family. Follows shortly the perfect rebus of the lion holding the castle of Celestin IV, 1241, of the house of Castiglioni, which has furnished a series of Popes to Pius VIII, 1829. The arms of Benedict XII, 1334, of the Novelli, show on a blue field a small blank (argent) escutcheon indicative of a *novus homo*. Innocent VII, 1404, displays an irradiated star expressive of the Miliorati. John XXIII, 1410, of the house of Cossa, proclaims his name with a leg—*coscia*. So with the column of Martin V (Colonna); the oak-tree, *rovere*, of Sixtus IV (della Rovere); the mountains of Julius III (del Monte); the stag, *cervo*, of Marcus II (Cervini); the pear-branch of Sixtus V (Peretti); the chestnut of Urban VII (Castagna); the precipitous mountain, *chieggia*, of Alexander VII (Chigi); the high-riding stars of Clement X (Altieri); the broth- or drinking-pot, *pignatta*, of Innocent XII (Pignatelli); the hat of Gregory XVI (Cappellari). And there are undoubtedly others that could be explained by this early fondness for the perspicuous or even the far-fetched rebus. No one familiar with the temper of simple medieval heraldry is surprised at the bees on the shield of the Barberini, who, passing by the accurate etymology of their patronymic, displayed these little barbed insects as a sufficiently clear play on the name.

So with the "church" of the della Chiesa we have a shield wholly in keeping with the medieval spirit of heraldry which the arms of so many of Benedict XV's predecessors so clearly express. And it is in this same spirit that some of our American hierarchy, in the absence of inherited insignia, have been content with simple *armes parlantes*, notably the Bishop of Saint Cloud, Monsignor Busch, with his rose-bush, the Bishop of Corpus Christi, Monsignor Nussbaum, with his nut-tree, and others.

On the shield of the Holy Father there remains to be considered the black eagle on its gold field. In Figure B I have drawn the form in which I believe this charge first appeared on the della Chiesa arms; as a "chief of the Empire" (the "chief" comprising only the upper *third* of the shield), to show the political affiliations of the family. There are well-nigh endless examples of this to be found in Italian heraldry;

for at a time when fierce factional strife waged between Guelphs and Ghibellines it was not only sentimentally important but often highly advisable from a practical standpoint to show on one's arms, and therefore heraldically to indicate on one's property, one's political party. The nobles of the Guelphic or Angevin faction placed on their shields a blue chief with the gold fleurs-de-lis and the red "label" of the Angevin Kings of Naples. A survival of this Guelphic political chief appears on the arms of Innocent X (Pamfili). The Ghibelline faction displayed on a chief the imperial emblem



FIG. B

of the Hohenstaufen, and we have this chief retained on the arms of Clement III (Scolari), Paul V (Borghese), Innocent XI (Odescalchi), and Alexander VIII (Ottoboni). These Ghibelline chiefs usually show the whole body of the eagle, but the della Chiesa version, that of only the upper half of the eagle, is not unique in Italian heraldry and arises undoubtedly merely from a desire to show the head and wings on a larger and therefore a more perspicuous scale than is possible when space has to be reserved for the outspread legs and tail. It will be noted that the della Chiesa version shows but a single-headed eagle; but on the coinage of Paul V and of Innocent XI the eagle is likewise single-headed, whereas that on the coins of Alexander VIII is double-headed. For a discussion of the arms of the Empire, and their transition from the single to the double-headed bird, I refer the reader to *Heraldry British and Foreign*, by John Woodward, LL.D., Edinburgh, 1896. That the Guelph-Ghibelline quarrels were fairly synchronous with the transitional period of the imperial heraldry will account for the variations in the several chiefs cited. Again, the eagle on the della Chiesa chief is not

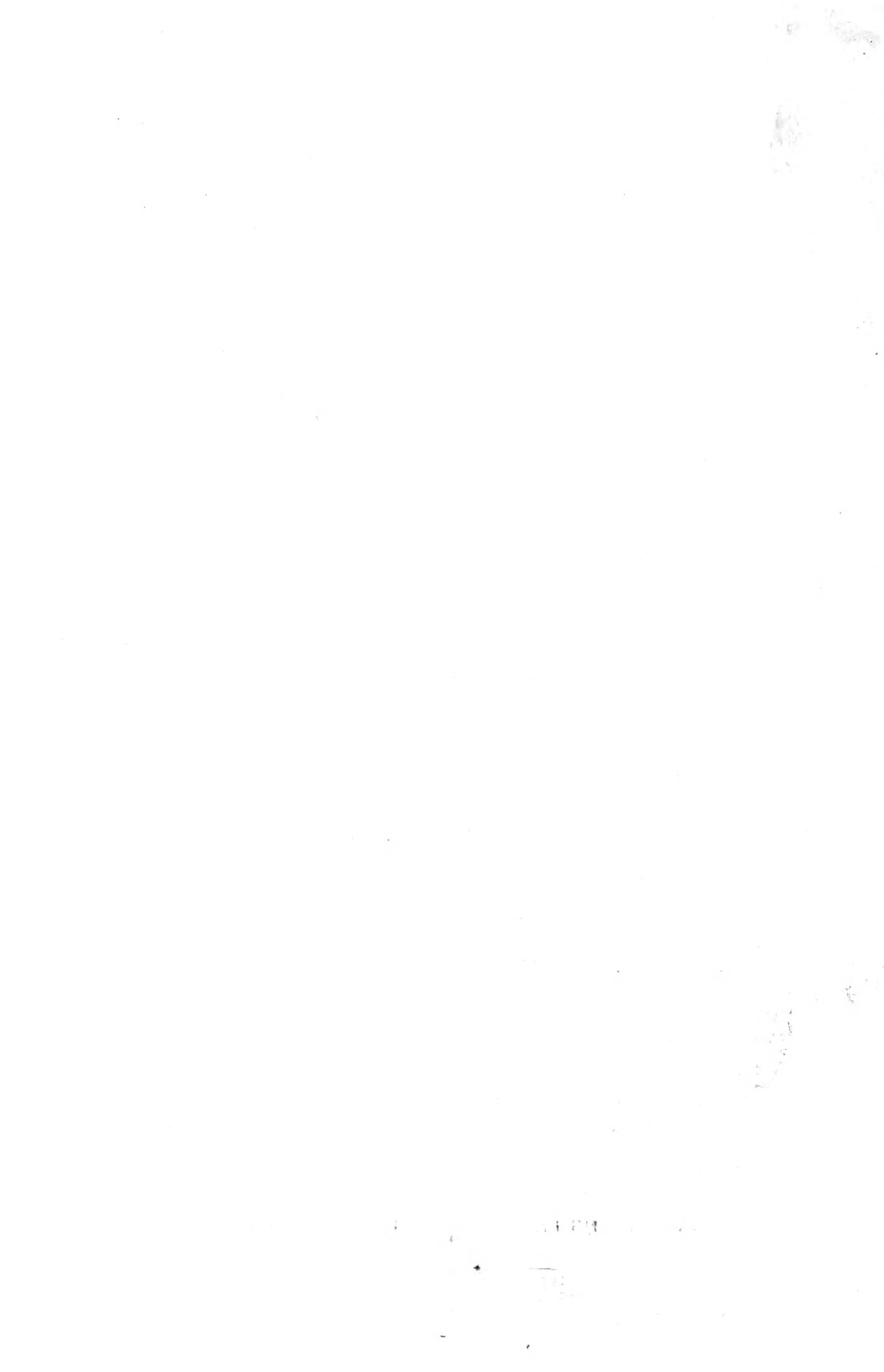
crowned, while those on the other papal coats are; but this is a minor variation, again not unique in Italian heraldry, and does not affect the origin or the significance of the charge in question.

But, it may be objected, the eagle of the Empire on Benedict XV's coat does not appear on a chief, occupying merely the upper third part of the shield, but in a compartment of equal importance with that occupied by the church. In other words, the Pope's shield is divided "per fess", or horizontally into two equal parts. This development of what was undoubtedly originally a chief will perplex no one familiar with the mutations of heraldic designs, in the course of centuries, at the hands of successive draughtsmen. Precisely the same thing has happened on some of the papal coinage with this very "chief of the Empire", notably in the case of the Ottoboni arms. On some few of Alexander VIII's coins the eagle occupies, as originally, but the upper third, but on the majority of them it fills fully half of the shield or cartouche, and the same variation is found on the coins of Paul V: yet careful heralds have always blazoned the Ottoboni and the Borghese arms as charged with a chief and *not* "party per fess". And I should be inclined so to blazon the della Chiesa arms except for the fact that in the two prints, on which I have based my study, one a shield, the other an oval cartouche, the "political", imperial compartment fills unmistakably half of the total field. I have merely to record it as I have found it, and to explain by the above examples how, judging from many other cases also, it has developed to its present proportions.

Finally as for the colors of the Pontiff's arms. Unfortunately I cannot tell you just what moral attributes the blue and gold of the field parted per bend, etc., indicate. In my library I can pick out one author who will gravely declare that the blue expresses a particular virtue, and then I can readily pick out another who with equal gravity will ascribe the same virtue to red, etc., etc. Of course amateurs who have access only to a very limited collection, less frequently run foul of this dilemma—often, indeed, do not suspect its existence. A student of the history of heraldry must collect these writers, and even study them, just as a student of the history of science must have some acquaintance with the writings of



PAPAL COINS FROM THE VATICAN COLLECTION



Paracelsus and others less worthy. But my own opinion runs with that of Planché, who as Somerset Herald had the advantage of being an official, not an amateur practitioner, and who, equipped with more scholarship than the general run of heraldic writers, may almost be called the father of modern heraldic archeological research. "The egregious absurdity," he exclaims,³ "of considering that certain tinctures typified the virtues or disposition of the bearer, requires no other refutation than the contradictory assertions of the pedantic essayists themselves." It would be quite in the vein with these to say that the silver of the church protected by the red roof indicated, through the essential heraldic significance of these tinctures, the spotless purity of the Faith, testified to by the blood of martyrs; and if I had written this in the sixteenth or the seventeenth century some modern heraldic amateur would very likely now be quoting me with satisfaction. I can, however, only point out that the tinctures of the church are the most natural ones imaginable, as the Italian countryside swarms with little whitewashed churches with red-tiled roofs; and if you should set one on a hill when the grass was burnt or the harvest was ripe you would have a combination of church, yellow hill, and blue sky which the papal coat reduces to the very abstract conventions of heraldic pattern. But if we should take seriously my "sentimental" explanation of the tinctures of the church, what then should we say of another coat of the Conti della Chiesa, presumably of a different branch of the same house from which the Pope descends, blazoned by Rietstap,⁴ where the field is silver, the church red, and the roof blue? Well, the more we study this color question, not from the sixteenth and seventeenth century fantastical writers but from greatly older "original sources"—the earliest rolls of arms, etc., which modern archeological scholarship is rapidly making far more accessible to us than they were to these essayists—the more we shall feel inclined to agree with Woodward, one of the most distinguished heralds of his generation:⁵ "The old armorists covered their ignorance of the history of the subject on which they wrote,

³ *The Pursuivant of Arms*. Ed. 1873, p. 45.

⁴ *Armorial Général*. Ed. 2d, n. d., Vol. I, p. 418.

⁵ *Heraldry British and Foreign*. Vol. I, p. 68.

and filled their treatises, by assigning to each metal and color special attributes according to their combinations with others." (And, remember, it is difficult to find any two of them who agree in their ascriptions.) "Into these absurdities we need not enter; they were quite incompatible with the long prevalent system of *differencing the coats of members of the same family by change of tincture*; and as a matter of fact at no time, and in no country, were the moral qualities of the bearer indicated by the tincture or charges of the shield." (The italics are mine.)

Now anyone with access to a large collection of heraldic "astrology" can flood me with a mass of quotations to the opposite effect (I can do it myself!), and the layman in the subject will either believe that weight of numbers is sufficient refutation or will abandon the subject in the disgust that these elaborate trivialities often inspire. But it is not weight of numbers which counts, but scholarship. And if there is any value in the testimony of silence, you will find the two most learned heralds of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Father Ménestrier and Camden, Clarenceux King of Arms, serenely free from these vagaries concerning color. No writer of importance during the past fifty years, since the revival of heraldic scholarship, has for a moment entertained them. I remember some years ago looking over a book of the owners' flags in the New York Yacht Club. (Yacht flags, despite their restricted range, have astonishingly much in common with early heraldry, both in their underlying purpose and in the means by which it is attained.) When I came to the flag of the member with whom I was sitting, I asked him why he had chosen green and white. "Oh, merely because I particularly liked the colors—and, besides, they were the colors of my old college club." Just so, I feel, with Father de Varennes, that it is absurd to attribute to our fighting forebears a more delicately complicated psychology than our own. May it not be mere common sense to assume that the first armigerous della Chiesa chose the tinctures he did because he "particularly liked" them? Or he may have chosen them, as is in some cases historically demonstrable, simply because they were the livery colors of some more important personage to whom he was in some way attached. And a cadet, before the

invention of the comparatively modern "brisures" or "differences" of small added charges (labels, mullets, etc.), obliged to "difference" his shield from that of his senior kinsman, had the choice (and the same practice has obtained in Scottish heraldry up to comparatively recent times) of changing either the principal charge or the tinctures. Not wishing to change so expressive a rebus as the *chiesa*, he would certainly change the tinctures, without this alteration at all necessarily involving a spiritual variation from the family type. In short, considering this early practice, of which we now have endless data, when one theory does not square with common sense and the other does, we have two possible conclusions: first, that either our forebears were devoid of common sense or heraldry certainly was; second, that our practical theory is the correct one.

One final point to the tinctures of the Papal arms. It will be noted that much of the silver church impinges on the gold field and that much of the red roof impinges on the blue: metal on metal and color on color. "False heraldry!" will at once exclaim those amateurs whose knowledge is limited to that of the popular heraldic "manuals". But these manuals bear the same relation to the great practice of heraldry as do primers to the highly flexible literature of a language: they may be sound as far as they go, but they do not go very far. It is a commonplace of heraldry that when the field is equally compounded of color and metal, the charges may be either of metal or of color; also that the accessories of charges, such as the tongues and claws of animals, the coronets with which figures are often crowned, etc., etc., are exempt from this elementary rule. To give illustrative examples would be to fill a volume. There is therefore no false heraldry on the Papal arms; and indeed the whole series, from Lucius II down, has been singularly free from this.

II.

In view of the fact that the arms of His Holiness Pope Benedict XV will presently appear in many American churches and other buildings under ecclesiastical control, it may be well that artificers in stone, fresco, glass, etc., and the clergy and

architects who commission these craftsmen, be helped to understand somewhat more clearly than at present seems the case, the essentials of papal heraldry and its flexibility. The popular errors in connexion with this subject are so many and so deeply rooted that I have space to discuss but a few of them, and only those which seem most important from an architect's point of view.

First, however, it may be useful to explain in part how these errors have generally arisen, a matter very clear to the student of the history of heraldry but one well nigh of hopeless confusion to the uninitiate. Woodward⁶ exclaims with some bitterness: "Manuals of, and Introductions to, Heraldry have been sufficiently abundant. For the most part compilations from their predecessors, and showing very little original investigation or research, the *crambe repetita* has been dished up *ad nauseam*, but more advanced treatises . . . dealing more fully with particular branches of the subject than is possible in a general work, have been very few and far between." Since the Protestant Reformation English heraldic writers have had little concern with Catholic armory. Indeed, apart from this work of Woodward's, now hard to procure, I do not know of a single book in English, other than mere lists and studies of episcopal blazons, that deals exclusively with the confused subject of ecclesiastical heraldry. And Woodward's book, the work of an Anglican and a very conscientious scholar, unfortunately bristles with inaccuracies when distinctively Catholic heraldry is involved. More accessible to Americans is the avowedly cursory article on ecclesiastical heraldry in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, by Mr. A. C. Fox-Davies. The author, a Protestant, had obviously little or no access to Catholic "original sources", and was at no pains to do more than expound Anglican usage and rehash Monsignors Barbier de Montault and Battandier. The illustrations, signed by Mrs. Fox-Davies ("C. Helard"), are largely literal reproductions from drawings by Herr Ströhl,⁷ with no credit given. This article is a wholly regrettable feature of a distinguished publication.

⁶ *Ecclesiastical Heraldry*, by John Woodward, LL.D. Edinburgh, 1899.

⁷ *Heraldischer Atlas*, von H. G. Ströhl. Stuttgart, 1899.

In French there have been a number of minor writers on ecclesiastical heraldry, but it is advisable to take most of these *grano cum salis*. No other country, I think, has been so prolific of amateur heraldists who, innocent for the most part of scholarship, have been willing, in Woodward's phrase, to dish up the *crambe repetita* of their predecessors *ad nauseam*. Often the titles appended to these authors' names will impress the unwary: "Membre du Conseil Héraldique de France" is one of the most imposing and frequent. It has a reassuringly "official" sound—until one learns that the "Conseil Héraldique", recently defunct, was simply a voluntary association of amateurs whose enthusiasm, judging from their publications, frequently outran their scholarship, and whose status had nothing whatever "official" about it. I have yet to find a work of first-class original research emanating from this source. Most of the writers go back to Vulson de la Columbière,⁸ and then embroider one upon the other. Our Anglican friends have a pleasant term which they apply when one or another of them adds to his service some hitherto unknown or unaccepted bit of ceremonial or symbolism: they call it "fancy ritual". Among a small wing of the "High Church" party each tries liturgically to be "more Catholic than the Pope", and the results are sometimes astonishing. Well, with us Liturgy is a well-ordered science; but in heraldry, because of the very few authoritative decrees on the subject, we have many "fancy ritualists", each, seemingly, feeling in honor bound to read into the simple forms of ecclesiastical armorials more pious symbolism than his predecessor, and, when it comes to papal armorials, each striving, apparently, to be in his explanations "more Catholic than the Pope".

I wish to quote a certain number of statements from these wholly well-intentioned "fancy ritualists" and then to compare them with the actual official heraldic usage of the Sovereign Pontiffs. And I shall in most instances base my own conclusions on the pontifical coinage, for this reason: I know of no other continuous series of contemporaneous papal heraldic "sources" of equal authoritativeness or accessibility. To an heraldic archeologist an armorial seal is of the highest

⁸ *La Science Héroïque*, par Marc Vulson de la Columbière. Paris, 1644.

evidential value; but the Popes have never used seals bearing their official arms. The arms on papal monuments are of great weight with the student, but the evidence of these is not always strictly "contemporaneous", the funeral monuments in most cases being erected after the decease of the Pontiff, and the accuracy of the heraldry at times hinging chiefly on data supplied to the artificer by minor officials. But the papal coinage, armorial since John XXIII, 1410, furnishes us with evidence in each case necessarily contemporaneous and necessarily authoritative. To question the evidential validity of a papal coin issued with the official sanction of the Sovereign Pontiff would be a fatuity from which even the most confirmed heraldic "fancy ritualist" would shrink. We have, then, a series of authoritative original sources the testimony of which cannot be impugned; and I shall draw freely from the great (and costly) work on the Vatican numismatic collection published at the command of Pius X.⁹

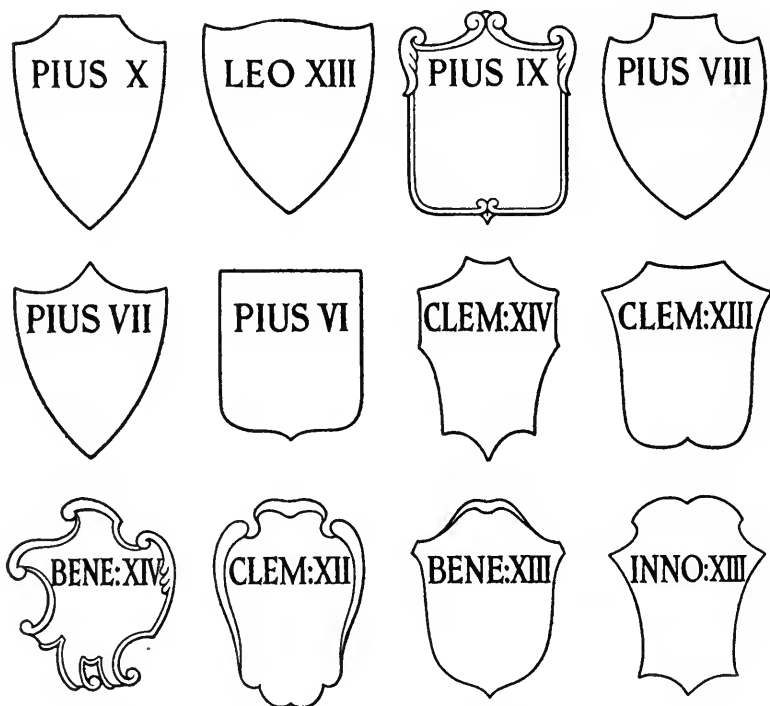
First as to the papal shield. Vulson de la Columbière, writing in 1644, gives the papal arms on an oval cartouche. His chief book, one of the most beautifully printed French works on heraldry in the seventeenth century, had an enormous vogue—and for nearly three hundred years most subsequent French writers have, parrot-like, repeated this oval, some even giving a symbolical reason why the Popes do not use a shield. A recent writer, an ecclesiastic, states with confusing brevity: "The Pope's escutcheon or shield is oval in shape". As a matter of fact the Pope's escutcheon or shield is nothing of the sort. The Pope's shield is a shield and his oval cartouche (on which his arms often but not at all necessarily appear) is an oval. The point involved is, fundamentally, not in the least an heraldic one, but one of architectural or decorative style. We owe to the Italian Renaissance, and, chiefly, to Bramante, the introduction of the architectural "cartouche" in papal heraldry. Before then, as any student of Gothic architecture knows, heraldry as a decorative adjunct of architecture was treated with a simple, effective realism: the stone was carved and painted as if an actual tourney shield was hung up, without additional framing or embellishment other than, at times,

⁹ *Le Monete e le Bolle Plumbee Pontificie del Medagliere Vaticano*, da Camillo Serafini. Milano. Vol. I, 1910; Vol. II, 1912; Vol. III, 1913.

its own proper, heraldic "external ornaments" of mantling, etc. The angles of the shield lent themselves perfectly to the style of architecture of which they became a part. With the Renaissance, however, it became obvious to architects and decorators that the severely simple forms of actual shields did not always lend themselves harmoniously to this new style. The shields were therefore modified and brought into harmony with the other architectural details; often the shields were frankly abandoned and the heraldic figures were placed immediately upon a decorative panel, scroll, cartouche—whatever seemed most effective. The ovoid cartouche lent itself perfectly to Bramante's style; and, of course, the general decorative character of the two most important papal structures in Rome, St. Peter's and the Vatican, was fixed for all time by this genius. Now right here must be sharply drawn the distinction between heraldry *qua* heraldry, and heraldry as a decorative adjunct to architecture. When heraldry is involved simply *qua* heraldry, that is when there is no question of conforming for the sake of decorative consistency to an arbitrarily determined "style", a coat-of-arms inevitably presupposes a *shield*, whether the arms are those of the Holy Father or those of his humblest armigerous subject. And both good taste and common sense dictate that the shape of shield to be employed shall correspond to one of the simple forms in actual use when heraldry was a practical operative matter, and not an affair of closet speculation or architectural experiment. When, however, the problem is purely one of decorative consistency, the craftsman is wholly at liberty to bring his shield or cartouche into harmony of line with whatever decorative style is for the time being paramount.

It is therefore due merely to the operation of ordinary good taste that in buildings with the particular architectural character of St. Peter's and the Vatican the papal arms should appear in decorative forms consistent with their environment. It is also perfectly natural that in the engraved headings of briefs, etc., issued from the pontifical palaces and offices, the same decorative heraldic style should persist. But it is a gross error for architects and other designers (and for writers on heraldry!) to feel, because the only example of the current papal arms they may have seen approaches, decoratively, this

Renaissance, "Bramante" type (as does the heading of the "Analecta" in *THE ECCLESIASTICAL REVIEW*), that this form is the only proper one and rigidly prescribed. Blindly to follow this view is often to mar otherwise admirable work. For example, on one of the façades of the beautiful Gothic



TYPES OF SHIELD USED BY SEVERAL MODERN POPES.

building of Boston College, designed by the distinguished architect Mr. Charles D. Maginnis, are seven coats-of-arms. Six of them are properly on Gothic shields; the seventh, the arms of Pius X, is, improperly, on a Renaissance cartouche, so cruelly out of harmony with the style of the building that it sets one's teeth on edge. The architect is to be acquitted of blame, for on the original proposed drawings the design was a correctly consistent one. I adduce this strikingly unfortunate instance merely because this kind of error will constantly be

repeated until the point I am discussing becomes perfectly clear to the clerical mind.

On the earliest armorial papal coinage, the simple Gothic shield is invariably used (of the shape called "Irish" by the same recent writer!). Not until the coins of Alexander VI, who commissioned Bramante to paint his arms over the Porta Santa of Saint John Lateran, does the oval cartouche appear. And on some of his coins the original shield is retained. Julius II's coins also show the oval, and then nothing but shields appear until the coinage of Paul III who uses the cartouche, but only on his minor coins. But it is needless to run through the long catalogue in detail. From it anyone not blind can see that the papal heraldry has constantly, like every other heraldry, involved shield forms. For the sake of the doubting I have carefully redrawn the types of shields used by twelve modern popes: ten are drawn from their coinage; that of Leo XIII is copied from the papal arms embroidered on the fanons of that Pontiff's Jubilee tiara; that of Pius X is from the arms stamped on the bindings of the numismatic volumes, already cited, published by His late Holiness' command. Each shield, of course, was accompanied by the tiara and keys, but these are omitted from considerations of space. From these shields any student of "styles" can see how even the papal arms have been affected by successive decorative fashions. In the shield of Benedict XIV he will recognize the gay, fantastic style known as "rococo" or "Louis Quinze", in that of Pius VII an echo of the pseudo-classical, so-called "Adam" style of the last quarter of the eighteenth century (called by the before-mentioned writer the "Swiss and American" form of shield!), etc., etc. Some day, perhaps, but at the cost of wearisome iteration, we may get rid of the heresy that the Pope's "shield" is necessarily an "oval".

Like the papal shield, the tiara has also given our heraldic "fancy ritualists" much material for ingenious speculation and assertion. One is perhaps as good as another for a text. Let me translate from the Baron du Roure de Paulin.¹⁰ "Chancelier de la Convention Internationale d'Héraldique" (no corporate name is too magnificent for these societies of ama-

¹⁰ *L'Héraldique Ecclésiastique*, par le Baron du Roure de Paulin. Paris, 1911. P. 11.

teurs to assume!). Speaking of the crowns of the pontifical tiara he says: "The *fleurons* have nearly the form of those of ducal coronets: one must take great care not to give them the appearance of fleurs-de-lis, as many French artists generally do." Here again the testimony of the papal coinage is useful. While it is true that on a majority of the coins the fleurons of the tiara are of the conventional form resembling the so-called "strawberry-leaf" of ducal coronets, yet coins of Sixtus IV, Clement VII, Alexander VII, Clement IX, Clement X, and others, show fleurons that an heraldic numismatist would unhesitatingly call fleurs-de-lis. However, I myself have not taken "great care" to avoid this form in my own drawing of the tiara, for the simple reason that in it I have closely followed not heraldic drawings but a photograph in my collection of the actual Jubilee tiara of Leo XIII, on which the "fleurons" *are* fleurs-de-lis! The truth of the matter is that on this point, as on others, a certain amount of freedom has always been exercised. The crowns on one or two papal tiaras of the coinage show merely the old plainly-pointed coronets known to heralds as the "antique crown", a form still borne by many of the Roman princes. A designer to-day may fairly legitimately use whichever of these three cited shapes he pleases, although the last-named may well be abandoned as too exceptional. My only point is to indicate the decorative flexibility of these papal armorials—and the folly of generalizing, as do many of these writers, on insufficient data.

Again, however we may explain, archeologically, the origin of the tiara or, liturgically, its significance, we need not, as students of heraldry, pay undue attention to somewhat confusing statements like the following: "The three crowns; by heraldic tradition, and as can be *seen* [*italics mine*] on the tiara of the Pontifical Jubilee of Leo XIII, 1902, are of three different orders: the larger and lower one is a royal crown of fleurs-de-lis, the middle is a princely or ducal coronet, and the upper a count's coronet." Now the ornaments surrounding the rim of a ducal coronet are usually "strawberry-leaf" fleurons and those on the majority of counts' coronets large pearls. If the statement of my clerical friend, whom I am once more quoting, means that the three crowns are of different "orders" in the architectural sense of (visible) "forms",

we have obviously been studying different tiaras of Leo XIII, and my friend's singular example is unknown to me. The confusion is probably one of language (my friend being a Swiss); for on every official version of the tiara which I have seen, actual or represented, the three crowns have been substantially uniform in design. So, also, different heraldists will give you different directions for the colors and ornaments of the tiara: it is at times of white stuff, or of silver, or of gold; with gold and jeweled crowns; it is lined with white—it is lined with red; the fanons are of white silk, of blue, of silver, etc., marked with from two to half a dozen black crosses. (The fanons of Leo XIII's tiara are, as before mentioned, simply embroidered with his arms.) Well, whatever kind of tiara the liturgist, on the one hand, or the heraldic "fancy ritualist", on the other, may construct, the conscientious heraldic craftsman may comfortably go ahead and within reasonable limits suit his own fancy. The tiara on Pope Benedict's letter heading, from which I have derived His Holiness's armorial bearings, is wholly of gold with silver fanons; as for the black crosses, we may safely put them aside for use on the archiepiscopal pallium.

Finally, as to the keys. Here our "fancy ritualists" break loose with a vengeance, but I will spare the reader the amazing intricacies of the minutiae they insist upon. Vulson de la Columbière was content to state that both keys are of gold. I am content to state that on the Holy Father's letter heading both keys are of gold. But in between is a vast array of heraldists insisting that one key *must* be of silver, and giving an astonishing number of reasons why. As a matter of fact, on many Roman monuments one of the keys *is* shown as silver, but one will find perhaps an equal number on which both keys are gold. Here, again, is a reasonable freedom. For my own part, I cannot see why these heraldic sentimentalists do not go to the logical extreme of their fancy, and make one key of iron or some even "baser" metal. But as a certain number of the Sovereign Pontiffs have been satisfied with the mere symbolism of two keys, *tout court*, irrespective of their tinctures, it would seem a matter of supererogation to insist on being "more Catholic than the Pope" in this respect. So, too, "the wards must always open in crosses": but the wards on

many papal coins do not—it is enough that the keys are keys. Still, the symbolism of this point is so natural, and is found on so many examples of papal armorials, that it may well be carefully retained. Again, the keys “must” be tied together with a cord ending in tassels, of red—of gold—with some few authors, of blue. But the papal arms are often officially displayed without this cord (there are many examples in the coinage). Once more we are permitted a reasonable freedom; on some styles of design the cord is a very graceful addition, on others it would not be. The cords on the Holy Father’s letter head are of gold. The position of the keys excites some writers who declare that they must always appear wholly *above* the shield, between it and the tiara; others permit the shafts of the keys to descend behind the shield, the handles appearing half-way down. Here, once more some definite, recondite “symbolism” is involved. M. du Roure de Paulin on this point is very positive: to cross them their full length behind the shield—with the handles on the base line—is, he declares, a gross error—“une faute lourde”.¹¹ I have not the temerity, however, to convict Pius VII, for example, of “gross error”. In the illustration of one of his coins you will see how that Pontiff has permitted his arms to be displayed in a manner that would shock the good “Chancellor of the International Heraldic Convention”. With this I shall rest my case.

From the foregoing discussion of papal blazons and the varying forms of the papal heraldic external ornaments, I have tried to show, first, how simple, rational, and clear have been the armorials of the Sovereign Pontiffs from Lucius II to His Holiness Pope Benedict XV—how free in their “charges” from the sentimentalities of the imaginative as opposed to the scientific students of heraldry. Secondly, how flexible has been the artistic rendering of these armorials, the Pontiffs permitting, within a definite range, the artistic temper of each age to express itself naturally in the decorative forms of their own armorials, serenely unhampered by the sciolistic “rules” with which self-constituted “authorities” have sought to restrict the practice of even papal heraldry.

¹¹ Op. cit., p. 12.

The twelve coins in my illustration I have chosen either for their beauty, for their heraldic interest, or because they illustrate some point which I have endeavored to make clear in the foregoing discussion. They should be of high value to architects and other designers, as they express a variety of decorative styles and fall within a wide range of dates, as follows: 1. Benedict XIV, 1740-58, full rococo: note the absence of key-strings; 2. Clement X, 1670-76; 3. Sixtus IV: note the position of the keys; 4. Pius VII, 1800-23; 5. Leo X, 1513-22: note the lion-heads as handles of the keys; 6. Innocent X: note the Guelphic "chief" of fleurs-de-lis; 7. Innocent XI, 1676-89: note "the chief of the Empire", and the very graceful arrangement of the key-strings; 8. Alexander VII, 1655-67; 9. another coin of Leo X: note the lions, a unique instance of supporters on the coinage; 10. Innocent XII, 1691-1700; 11. Martin V, 1417-31: note the size of the tiara and its fleur-de-lis crowns; 12. Clement XI, 1700-21.

In conclusion, I would point out the fact, for the benefit of a few of our Ordinaries who have undoubtedly been misled by untrained amateur heralds, that a representation of our Saviour, of Our Lady, or of any Sainted Person, has never appeared on a papal coat-of-arms. *Reverentiae causa*, one would never appear on an episcopal shield, if the true nature of heraldry were more generally apprehended.

PIERRE DE CHAIGNON LA ROSE.

Cambridge, Mass.

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